

SHIFTING GEARS

GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS 01440

INTERVIEWEE: Frances Austikalis

INTERVIEWER: Martha Norkunas

TRANSCRIBER: Marilyn Sadowski

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MN: Today is February 15, 1989 and I'm here with Frances, how do you pronounce?

FA: Austikalis.

MN: Austikalis at the Gardner Heritage State Park. Okay, Frances, let's start by telling me a little bit how your family arrived in Gardner. Do you know what country they came from? or?

FA: Well, ah, my mother was born here, my father came from Lithuania when he was 7 years old and lived in Gardner most of his life.

MN: Do you know why his parents immigrated from Lithuania?

FA: No, I, just for better living, I guess, far as I know. Isn't that why everybody came here? Most people, really?

MN: And did he have family or was there reason that his family came to Gardner.

FA: I have no idea, he never said. All's I know is he was 7 years old when he got here. His father died when he was real young, so it was just his mother.

MN: Just he and his mother?

FA: Yeah, well, he had sisters. Let me see, he had two sisters, I think. Da, this is I can't think, really. Yeah, two, three sisters, three sisters, and one brother. But why he came, I just figured it was a better opportunity.

MN: Yeah, I wonder if his mother new anybody in Gardner or.

FA: I have no idea. See, ah, I don't really ah remember his, I don't remember his father at all and his mother ah I can't say I remember her either, really.

MN: Is your mother Lithuanian also?

FA: Yeah, my mother was born here. Her parents come over from the old country too, but I think for the same thing, but when they first came they must of had somebody because they, they didn't come to Gardner, they were in um I think around Holyoke but then there was no work out there and they migrated here. That's the way I understand that.

MN: What did your parents work at?

FA: Well, um, her father worked at Florence Stove, but I guess her mother never worked, she's housewife, took care of the kids?

MN: Did your mother work?

FA: My mother worked after the kids were all in school. She worked at ah Bents and the she worked at Sieberts and when Sieberts closed she retired.

MN: Wha, what'd she do at Bents?

FA: Striping. At Sieberts she did upholstering.

MN: And did she work there for some time at each place?

FA: She worked Sieberts quite a few years, Bents, I don't remember how long she probably there a few years. She worked with Betty Allard. She worked there quite a few years, I guess. Sieberts she worked a few, till it closed. After she left she went to Sieberts and stayed there until they closed down and went out of business then she didn't look for another job, she stayed home?

MN: Why did she leave S. Bents?

FA: I really don't know, she just got fed up, I guess, I don't know. You know how you get fed up sometime in this job, that's what I think, course I could ask her, I, but I think that's the reason, she just got fed up.

MN: Did she do other things in the company besides striping?

FA: Not at Bent's, that's the only thing, as far as I know, striping.

MN: That's pretty much only women that do that, isn't it?

FA: Yeah, that's, the only women that I know that do it, I don't know if any man, I mean, ah, at Heywood's it used to be only women, too. Yeah, I don't know of any men that did it, anyway. It was a steady hand, you needed steady hand, you know cause it was all, this, years ago it was all freehand, you didn't have no stencils and all made these things all freehand, so.

MN: What about your father, what did he do for work?

FA: Well, my father, when I was little, he worked down Thayers. What he did that fiber tacking. That's and after that I guess Thayers moved out or somehow he worked at Kelly's for a while. I don't know what he did at Kelly's.

MN: What's Kelly's?

FA: Kelly Brothers, I was, across, you know where Logan street, where that Romes has their furniture outlet, well, that used to be Kelly Brothers. He worked there, but I don't know what he did there.

MN: They made furniture?

FA: They used to, but now they just sell, Romes has bought it out like for a warehouse. He worked there, and then after that he went to firing. Fire, not a fireman, but boilers. You know, you shovel coal in the, years ago. Shovel coal and then they converted to oil most places well he worked oh ah Mahoney's and then he worked down Nichols and Stones for a few years and he went up to the hospital aft, from that he retired.

MN: So he went from, to a different companies inside Gardner.

FA: Yeah, yeah he's worked different companies. Well, Thayer's I guess moved out so he had to get another job, but I don't know if he worked at Kelly's before or after, you know, I don't know, I was little, I don't remember, (chuckle) but I know he worked both places and then, the last I don't know, 10, 15 years, I guess he was a fireman, different companies, well he worked Nichols and Stones and Mahoneys and at the

Hospital. He didn't stay there very long. He retired.

MN: Was he a fireman at Nichols and Stone and Mahoney's?

FA: Yeah, yeah.

MN: Shoveling the coal.

FA: Yeah. But then, oh, Gem Cribs too, he worked Gem Cribs fireman for a while too, but I don't know why he left there.

MN: And, when you were growing up, how many are you in the family?

FA: Four, two boys and two girls.

MN: Where are you, the oldest?

FA: No, next to the oldest. I got a sister in Colorado. She's the oldest, and I'm next and my two brothers.

MN: Did you expect to go to work at a certain age.

FA: No, I, I went to work when I quit High School, that's wha, well I mean I've worked, I worked at the Old Mill, I worked at in Campus Restaurant, I don't know if you, you, you were too young for that. Before, well, around where Priscilla's is, there it was a restaurant there, all the kids used to hang, I waitressed there. I cleaned house just to get money, you know. But at those times, ah, we didn't have no money, my mother had four kids and there was only one working till she went to work and if you wanted something you had to work for it. Nobody gave us \$10 a week or, so we worked for what we, if we wanted something, we worked. I went to work and I started saving for a bicycle, I never got the bike, but I got a car, so.

MN: But you left high school to get your first job?

FA: I worked at Gem Cribs while I was going to high school and I don't know, I was flunking English in the senior year so I quit and I went to work.

MN: Did your family mind that you left school?

FA: No, not much they can do you know, when you, you're of age, you're of age, right? In fact, the only one that did graduate was my sister, my brothers, one of em, both of em quit and went in the service, when they came out they never went back, so.

MN: And, where did you go when you left school?

FA: Oh, well, I went down Mahoney's, I worked there for a while but I don't know, it was, I used to smoke then, and this girl and I went to smoke and they fired her and they didn't fire me, well, we're both smoking, so, I, I didn't figure it was right, so I quit too. Well, I mean, I was with her, I should have got fired too, but see, there was a couple girls in there that kinda ran the place and they squealed on her but not me, because they didn't like her, well, I didn't figure that was right, so from there I went to Heywoods and I was there for 34 years.

MN: Oh, you went right from Mahoney's to Heywoods?

FA: Yeah.

MN: What did you do at Mahoney's?

FA: Ah, I was driving up some kinda lawn chair. It was all wooden, but you know you

could lay back, wha, when you lay in the sun, it was all made outta wood and they put the canvas on it. I was driving those then. I didn't last there very long, two weeks.

MN: Oh, two weeks?

FA: Yeah, when they fired that girl, I quit. I went to Heywoods and I was there until they closed down.

MN: Why did you go to Heywoods?

FA: Well, I don't know, I heard too much stuff about Simplex and so I didn't want to go there and Heywoods paid pretty good at the time, you know, for, they're about the about the best paying one around, so I, I went there for the money, I guess, I'd say.

MN: And what year would that be?

FA: Ah, 1945.

MN: Did you have any trouble getting a job there?

FA: No. No. They hired me, no problem. I was 18, you had to be 18 at the time, so I went Bill Riley.

MN: Doing what?

FA: I was working in the office, paper work. And ah, when this other guy retired, I did the timecards and you know, it's a factory office, not in the main office.

MN: Did they give you a choice, what you would do?

FA: He asked me if I wanted the job and I yeah, I says yeah.

MN: Thank you,

FA: So I worked for him for 20 some odd years, I guess.

MN: Oh, in the, in the office.

FA: In the office.

MN: Can you tell me more specifically what you did?

FA: Well they had.

MN: Take me through like a day.

FA: Well, they had ah, ifa, ifa, have an order for so, so much, well, they made all kinds of furniture there, but they had a, a sheet, they gave me a sheet of paper and it was like for a oh, a bed, you need so many parts, they wanted 100 beds a certain number and then take some, so many pieces of this, so many piece of that, well, I'd figure out how many loads it would take to make those pieces and the ah I'd have this routing tag and I'd put it, give it to the guy and when he'd cut it every, you, pa, put the tag on the load and it's every operation that piece when through until it got to the stock room, so, and then when they come back, when the load left our department they'd give me the tag and I'd have a big sheet of paper, the, and I'd write where it went when it left out department so if somebody was looking for it they'd come look at my paper well, when it left here it went to the sanding room, so they'd go in the sanding room and find it, it from there and they, this tag would stay with the stock until it went to the stock room till its complete and ready for assembly.

MN: So where, tell me, you would write down all the places it would go.

FA: Wa, well, I would be on the tags, on this tag about that big, that big sheet of paper and it would have department 1, that would be the yard and then department 2, that was us, the mill room and when it so many pieces, it went through the sticker or whatever and they par, marked it on there, then the next department would be the sanding room, well the, they'd go up there and they'd mark it and ta, when it got to the stock room they'd take the tag off and you know when it was finished.

MN: Where'd it go after the sanding room?

FA: Well, when they put up an order they'd go to stock room, when it was finished. When they put up an order they'd call up and tell em they need so many beds so the person in the stock room would go and they'd get so much legs, so many side bo, side things and slats and whatever and they'd make up that bed. They'd have just enough for the order. And then you would take, the person in the stock room would have a list and they would take the card out and say, so mu, take that amount off so you always had a running, you knew how much stock you had on hand all the time. If they took 100, and you had 1000, well you'd have 900 left. And you'd keep subtracting it. See Heywoods was so big that like where I am now, Nichols and Stones, they're small. They make a few at a time. Heywoods used to make legs. They'd make the same leg for two months. You know, they'd just turn that one leg, they'd make thousands and thousands of em. And that, ah, here they make 500, or 1,000 you know, it's not the big operation. They don't have no stock room, really. But Heywoods used to have two floors at least over here, all just stock, just.

MN: In orders that they anticipated coming in?

FA: Yeah, well, yeah right. The, they, they sold such great volume and they were ah, Heywoods made good furniture, I've got, their furniture and thut, they always had this ahead, you know. If it was a new item they wouldn't do that, but if its something that's been in the line for years and it's always sold well they'd make thousands of em up. In fact, when they closed down, they had tens of thousands of legs, one kind, you know, that they sold out. I mean, this is small stuff down Nichols and Stones really, compared to Heywoods.

MN: And you would, you were the person that would keep track of how many legs were in stock.

FA: No, no I'd, I'd, the person in the stock room was that. I, I'd just make out the orders. I, ah, you know, make out the sheets. If they took 10 loads to, well, table tops, if it took 10 loads, you average, you gotta figure on waste and stuff, you average, we had a some kind of a thing you figure so many loads..

MN: What's a load?

FA: Well, it, it, its flat like this, a pallet or whatever you call it and then they'd pile em oh maybe 40 high and that would be one load and you'd put one tag, you might need 10 of those loads to make that order. So you'd have 10 loads with and by the time they went out you should have that plus 10%. They always made 10% if they call for 1000, well they made 1100, for, in case something spoiled or when their setting up so they did that.

MN: So you would follow the load. You would order those 10 loads.

FA: Yeah, but once they left my department I wouldn't have nothing to do with it, you know, but the next floor would make out slips and sometime, they'd bring em down to me and then I'd write em, write em in, but once they got to the stock room that was up to them.

MN: So you would follow it through until it was finished.

FA: That tag would, the tag would stay on the load.

MN: But you yourself would order those 10 loads.

FA: I mean, ah, ah, I would make. It'd start from me. I'd make the 10 loads and then it would go and that tag would follow all the way through, not, I wouldn't.

MN: So they might say to you, hey, we have to make 100 tables, order enough stock to make the 100 tables.

FA: Yeah, well, they'd give me the order and then I'd figure out how many loads it would take and I'd give this guy that was cutting the lumber, the guy that was in charge he, he would put it up on a board and they would cut it and then you'd make 10 loads, so many, I forget how high it was, 40 high. And that should take care of the order.

MN: Well, what was the name of your job? Did it have its name. You said you were in the mill room?

FA: Yeah, where everything starts. It's everything starts from the mill room. I don't know, I didn't have no name, I guess.

MN: And that, that, you said that was the first job you had there, or the second, that was the second?

FA: That's first I went in the office. Well, I was on the floor first and then the, they made a bigger office and they moved me in the office. I was out in the, the had a desk out in the floor and I was out there. And they made a bigger office so they put a, a little window, sliding window in and they'd throw the tags, every tag, when the load left, I had to make out a little slip of paper that.

MN: You had a lotta papers to keep track of.

FA: Yeah, I had papers. And then, after a while they got, we had the copying machine. I'd take the thing and throw it in there and make 10 tags instead of, at first we had to write all this stuff. But you, they had a oh what are those guys come in what'd they call em now. There supposed to make things run better.

MN: Efficiency?

FA: Yeah, efficiency expert come in and that's the only thing they kept from him is that system. Everything else they.

MN: What do you mean kept from him?

FA: Well, he's the one who figured out this system. See, they didn't used to do that before. He figured all this out and all the other stuff they never bother with, they just kept this tag where it stayed with the load until.

MN: But he had come in, the efficiency person, before you got there?

FA: No, while I was there. We used to do it differently and when he come in.

MN: How'd you used to do it?

FA: I'd just figure how many loads and they'd put this, just a little paper on em. but this one had ah, everything, you know, from where it started to where it ended in the stock room. Every operation. Some had 10 operations, some, you know it all

depends on what it was.

MN: And would you have to do this for everything? Every single order that came in, would that go through you?

FA: Everything that comes in, because, it, wer, we, everything starts from us.

MN: When you say us, who's us?

FA: Mill room, you know, our department.

MN: Were there other people doing what you did too?

FA: No, no. They working on a floor.

MN: So you were the only one that did that?

FA: Yeah, yeah.

MN: And every single order that'd come in would go through your hands?

FA: Well, they, my boss would give it to me and then I'd, I'd have to make up the papers to put on the loads, yeah.

MN: Did it take you very long to learn that job?

FA: No.

MN: It sounds very complicated, to me for some reason.

FA: No, it's not. No it's not really, it's not. It's not that complicated. It's simple, really.

MN: But you have to have a good head for figures, I guess.

FA: Well, once you learn how to do it, you know, it's, they, there was, they had some kind of a chart, you know, and you went to the chart, you wanted so many loads and you look at a chart and it, no it wasn't, it wasn't complicated, not really.

MN: And how long did you do that for?

FA: Oh, twenty some odd years, so. But then I, I was going to get off the job and I had this woman come in, but she said it was too much for, she couldn't, she couldn't do it. It made her too nervous. It was really simple. Now that lady runs the Red Rooster in Athol, Orange. But it, it, there was something to it, somedays you were real busy, some days you weren't. I enjoyed it, I enjoyed my work at Heywoods, I really did. I was sorry it closed down.

MN: Did you like it?

FA: I really did, yeah. I liked the people, I, I don't know, I just really enjoyed it. It's right in my back yard. I live on Maple street. You know were Maple street is? Right up the street here, the first street after Heywoods on the right. I miss it.

MN: Ah, did, you know in the 20 odd years you did that, the, the, I don't know what to call it.

FA: I don't know either.

MN: Did that change much, how you did it, in those 20 years?

FA: No, No, no. No, it's ah, you had so many operations, you, you, they bring it in from the yard, they cut it to size, you had differently lengths, you had, you know, and it, when they cut it, there was like four different cuts, they'd be a cut 50, it all depends what you're cutting, if you cut table tops, or dresser tops, they cut 50 inches then they'd cut 20 inches and 15 inches and 40 inches and they'd come through the play head and all fall on this big round table, it'd go around. Well, Simplex has the, ah, Simplex, ah.

MN: Nichols?

FA: Nichols has the same idea, but and then they'd pile it on these flats from the flat, all depends what it was it'd go either to the matching saw or rip saw. And they'd cut it, the guy would cut out the imperfections. And then, if it was like a table top, it had to be matched say 40 inches wide. Well, they'd match it 40 inches and this guy would put it on a flat, like 40 inches by 40 inches.

MN: That one piece.

FA: Yeah, so when he got done with one piece. So then the, they had a glue press and they'd go, that glue press and they'd or they'd join it first, I guess they put tongue and grooves. Then they'd go to glue press and he'd glue it up and when it come out it would be that thing and they'd go like Jenkins, they call it, it would trim, then they'd plane it then go into sanding and they'd shape it and when it got all through that it'd go to stock room till they, when they got an order for the table, they'd pull em out.

MN: So those would all be separate operations that different people did.

FA: Yeah, and that would all be on the tag, see, it'd be first, the first operation would be matching saw, so it'd go to matching saw, then it'll go to the joiner, then it'll go to glue press, it, it keeps going down the line until it was finished, last operation, after the last operation, it'd go in the stock room.

MN: And you had to know which places it went to for your job.

FA: Yeah, but I had all those, I had a, oh, I don't know if you call it a master copy, but I had these sheets of paper that I just put em in this copying machine and make so many tags and it's always on there. If they changed an operation, well, then they'd come down and cross it off, or if they took it out or added a new one just added it to the paper.

MN: So you would know that for a chair, you went through these operations, for a table it went through these different ones.

FA: Yeah, yeah, I have, all, every operation that it went through till it got to the stock room. Once it got to the stock room, it, the other operations main difference, this was just rough stock before it's finished. Not the finished product.

MN: Oh, so this'd just be the white stock.

FA: Yeah, up until, before assembly. Wa, whe, usually most of the stuff when it was assembled it went across the road. See, we work on this side, the building on the, right here.

MN: Where the Heritage Park is, that side.

FA: Yeah, we worked there and across, everything when finished or assembly, most of the stuff went across the road. The top two floors over here was the stock room for this side. Everything went up there went it got.

MN: How'd it get across to the other side?

FA: At the bridges. You noticed the bridges when you go, there's two of em. I don't know if there safe, now, hah, that's how they did it take it upstairs and go over the bridge.

MN: So everything would go across those bridges®

FA: Yeah, had to. It's the only way, unless you pulled it across the road, but that wouldn't be feasible, I don't think.

MN: Did anybody ever time you to see if you could go faster or ?

FA: No. No.

MN: You were, must be paid day wages.

FA: I was day rate. I wasn't piece work, this was all paper work, really, so there's no way I could go any faster, I couldn't go any, the machine would only go so fast . I could only write so fast. I didn't know how to type, so.

MN: Ah, and you didn't get a computer while you were there.

FA: No. No. I've been outta there, wha's it 9, it was 79 they closed down. I've been at Nichols and Stones since.

MN: So, ah, can you tell me a little bit what your working area looked like?

FA: Wood. Wood all over the place. Hah, they had machines, rip saws, I don't know if you know what a rip saw is. And they had like a table saw, where they used to match. They used to match a lot on the table saws, but then eventually they put the matching on the rip saw, and they got a lotta rip saws. They had oh, one, two, three, four, five, 8 or 9 of em, and they used to match em on that. They'd have two people.

MN: What's matching?

FA: Oh, they match for color. You know, the blanks, so, so wide. Well, they have, a person would match em here and push em through and the one on the back end would take em and put em on a pallet or flat or whatever. But it was machinery and wood that's all it was there. Mostly.

MN: And you were in the middle of all of the machines.

FA: Well, a, in the office, was, you know where the parking garage is, downstairs, well it was across from the main office, we had a little office right in there and the machines were outside of it.

MN: Could you hear them?

FA: Oh, yeah, you could hear em, but they, when they build the new office they insulated it so it wasn't as bad, but it was, it was loud. Loud enough.

MN: Did you mind?

FA: No. Didn't bother me. Used to it, you get used to it, I guess, all those years.

MN: Do you remember your first day?

FA: No, I really don't.

MN: Some people do, some people don't.

FA: No, I don't.

MN: And what, who was in the office with you?

FA: Oh, there's Arnie, a guy named Arnie. I don't remember what his last name was. But, he ah, he's since past away. He was quite a bit older. He used to do the time cards and Bill Riley and "Ticket" Tigalis. You know Ticket? No. He used to ah, he ran the, you should talk to him, he ran the oh, the dry kilns, where they dried the lumber. He lives down snake pond, yeah. He ah, he was in there. He come in, he had his little oven and he would cut some of the wood off and come and get the moisture content, put it in the oven for so long. That'd be interesting.

MN: Were there any other women in there with you?

FA: Not in the office, no. Oh no, they were on tha, in the other room working on the machines. I was the only one in there. It was ah, just a factory office. No

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BEGINNING TAPE ONE, SIDE B

MN: Ah, when, ah, did you make friends with any of the women that you worked (unintelligible).

FA: Oh yeah, yeah. Lot of em. Lot of em have since past away. Ah, in fact, one of the ladies, she used to live down by me and we used to walk to work together. She would walk down to, I lived on Conant street then when I was, we walked down the tracks, we walked down the tracks and all the way into Heywoods. That Conant street it's quite a ways. So. Then Lillianm Desolier, yeah, yeah, I, we, I'm friendly with all the women.

MN: When would you get to see them?

FA: At work.

MN: But, I mean, weren't you in the office and they were out on the floor?

FA: Oh yeah, but we, lunch time, we had lunch together, they'd come in the office, talk.

MN: Yeah, that's what I'm trying to get a feeling, was there time for people to talk a little bit during the day?

FA: Oh yeah, you had time, you go see em, go by the machines, speak to em. We had a good boss. Bill Riley was a good boss.

MN: Like, how was he a good boss?

FA: Give us a bad time, he was fair. Everybody got along with him, you did something wrong you got hell. If you didn't, we'd talk. Noon hours, we had go out to Central Variety, have lunch, but.

MN: Is that were you, I was going to ask you that, where you'd go for lunch.

FA: Yeah, I used to go to Central Variety, I live right up the street. You go home you'd get lazy, so you go down there, have lunch with the girls and Bill Riley used to eat with us, so, we had a good. I don't know, we had a good bunch.

MN: And ah, was there a lunch room or something?

FA: Yeah, they had a cafeteria, they didn't when I first went to work there, but they, they put one in after a while, I don't know how, how many years, but they had a cafeteria, had machines. Nothing you know, it's all out of the machines, you know, not like Simplex. Simplex has a regular cafeteria in there. We'd go sit in there if you smoked.

MN: That's what I was going to ask you, where.

FA: Course, then, a lotta times we'd meet in the ladies room, you know, the other departments those women would sit there and talk for a while.

MN: Did they have chairs?

FA: Well, they had benches, to sit, chew the fat. I liked it, I enjoyed it.

MN: That, when you think about why you liked it.

FA: I liked the people, the people were sociable, you know, eh, when I first went to Nichols and Stones they were different, you know, they weren't friendly, I'd sit there,

I was new and to, people, some people would come in, they'd been there a long time then they, they don't even talk to the people that is, I don't know, I don't understand that, see it was nothing like that over here. Everybody come in there always spoke to you. Other places they don't. They, I guess have there own click.

MN: Was there a reason they were friendly at Heywoods?

FA: I don't know, I really don't know, but they were, course I never worked much of any where else, so, that may be why, too. I was there a lotta years, but I enjoyed it. I'd still be there if it was open.

MN: Somebody told me that in one place, the women used to teach each other how to dance, not at Heywoods, but in another place, in the ladies room, or show hair styles.

FA: Oh, yeah, probably.

MN: Do you remember any of the things that you used to do.

FA: No. Mostly they'd go up there to smoke. You weren't sposed to, I didn't. I didn't go smoke, I'd go cafe, when they had the cafe, cafeteria outdoors, but, but a lot of em would go up there and smoke. You could get fired if you got caught, but, they'd go into the ladies room, lock the door. To each his own.

MN: Yeah, and did you have breaks, also?

FA: Yeah, we had one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Five, ten minutes, I forget, ten minutes maybe.

MN: Did you ever see any of these people outside a work?

FA: Oh yeah, we used to bowl, some of em, then ah, we'd go to Christmas parties together, when the Heywoods had their Christmas parties or outings and we'd go.

MN: Whe

FA: Not all the time, but, you know.

MN: You were on the bowling team?

FA: Yeah.

MN: Tell me about that.

FA: It's here! ah, well, we used to bowl, you know, with, it's diff, you'd get different teams together.

MN: Oh, that's you?

FA: Yeah, that's me when I was young.

MN: Oh, this is the shop news.

FA: Yeah, I only had a couple of pages, so I thought maybe you'd be interested in it.

MN: Ah, it doesn't say the date, but.

FA: No, I thought it would be on there, but it's not.

MN: Oh.

FA: Well, see, it's got something.

MN: Frances Austikalnis takes first place in bowling sweepstakes.

FA: See, I thought something like this when they used to make.

MN: Oh, and this is a do you remember way back when.

FA: Yeah, see. Hay, I don't remember that, that was about going out when I come to work, it was phasing out.

MN: I'd like to Xerox that. Ah.

FA: No, you can have it.

MN: Oh, thank you.

FA: I just come acrossed it one time when I was cleaning, I don't know, it got into photo album somehow, so, I figured somebody was saying they, they were, Harry Diamond, you know Harry Diamond, he wa, he was telling me I, so I was saying well if I ever see anybody I'll bring em those papers in case they're interested.

MN: And, what else did you do with the company socially?

FA: Well, we would.

MN: They had the social club, right?

FA: Yeah, they had social club, they had different parties and to the parties, you know, they had I don't remember now what it was but, like say Halloween, or something we'd go or they'd have dances the Eagles or the Elks, somewhere. They had bowling banquet, tha, this is from the bowling banquet I think, here. No, so we'd go.

MN: When you had time off at home, ah, I'm trying to get it, what would you do with your spare time, not that I should call it spare time, but your time when you weren't working, when you'd go home?

FA: We used ta bowl, I used to bowl a lot when I was younger, I spent a lotta time in the bowling alley, but now all of a sudden I, I don't know, I lost interest an, I used to be, when I was younger I was always bowling, always always. That's were I spent most of my time bowley, bowling, movies and the beach.

MN: With friends or family or?

FA: No, friends. A lot of us would get together, go to the beach.

MN: Hampton?

FA: Hampton, went to Daytona and all different, Virginia Beach. When we were young we took off. During vacation, though.

MN: And what about your job, did people change jobs much within the factory?

FA: Well, if there was an opening, and somebody wanted to better themselves, they posted it and you could sign up for it. You know, people would because it was piece work and they wanna make more money, but I was happy were I was, I stayed there.

MN: And you stayed there till the company closed?

FA: Yeah, I stayed there, well I didn't have the same job after while they were getting smaller so when they closed down ours we went across the road. We left this side completely. When I went over there they put me in charge of the stock room. It was a small operation then, you know. I

MN: When was that?

FA: Oh boy, it was, oh, let me see, 79, 78 oh maybe 75, 76. It was a few years before they closed. Well, of course we didn't know they were closing then.

MN: Oh, I was going to ask you that.

FA: No, no but it kept getting smaller, you knew something was going, you know, so. It was lot, they were making mostly stuff for ah Arabia, I guess. They had contract jobs.

MN: And what did you do then, you worked in the stock room?

FA: Yeah, put up the orders, you know, if somebody wanted 100 chairs, well I send to the stock for that 100 chairs. Upstairs to the assemblers. And then they take it off like I say we had little pad, we had so many and we'd subtract 10,000 legs we'd subtract well if it was 500 front, 500 back we'd subtract it from that.

MN: Did you like that as much as the other job.

FA: Oh, yeah. I liked that.

MN: Could you tell, you started to say that but, could you tell that something was happening to the company over time?

FA: Well, yeah, you knew something was happening because it kept, you know, things kept getting worse, slower or whatever, so. It wasn't getting any better. You knew it was going, going down hill.

MN: Well, what happened to it, do you think?

FA: I have no idea. I have no idea. They always claim it's when the younger generation takes over they don't, you know, they don't have the interest in it like their father's did or whatever. I have no idea, though. That's what they always say, they say that's happening to Simplex, now, you know. Take your pick.

MN: What do you mean, they don't have the interest.

FA: I don't know, they don't care. Their not, their not like their fathers, you know, their fathers put all their time and effort into it and they figure they're just not that interested in.

MN: The ones who own it, or who worked there?

FA: The ones who own it. The who were running it. When the, when the, the kids take over from the parents, you know like Mr. Watkins died now his son is there and he hasn't got the interest that his father has, had. His father did a lot for the community and ah, different things and he just, I don't know. That's what they say, I mean, I don't know.

MN: Did, wasn't there probably a lotta gossip, though, as the company started to close? What's going on?

FA: Oh, I imagine so, different things. Well, in the first place, the Heywood boys sold out all their stock, you know, so you knew something was, something was up there, but they, they sold their stock to somebody and I guess with stipulation that they would have so many years that they would keep em on. Ah, I don't, that's what, that's rumors, you know.

MN: And then how did they tell you that the company was going to close?

FA: Oh, they called us, us in the sto, us in a meeting while I was in charge of the stock rooms, and they ha, they called that and the, the foreman and they just told us that they were trying to sell the place and they think that they have a change and somebody's interested, but nobody was interested unless they go with the Heywood's name and they didn't want to sell the name. Because, I guess, the Heywoods were thinking of starting you know, a John Heywood and his son were going to start something in Winchendon, but I guess it didn't pan out. But, they didn't want to sell the name, anyway and whoever didn't want the factory without the name. They wanted, it was, ah would sell a lotta stuff if you had Heywood, Heywood-Wakefield. So, I guess it fell through.

MN: So they called you all in?

FA: They, no just in charge of the departments, you know, like the foreman, and they called me, because I was in the, I was in charge of the stock room so they, they told us that. At the time they were closing, but they says, he says, you, you, they are pretty sure that somebody will take over, but nobody ever did without the name. So you knew darn well there you were be out of a job sooner or later. It lasted a while after that, but they're laying off a little bit at a time. I was one a the last ones outta there. We all ended up.

MN: Where did people go?

FA: Oh, there's quite a few went to Nichols and Stones. I didn't wanna leave town, I coulda probably got a job in Starretts, but I didn't want,

MN: Where?

FA: Starretts in Athol. But I didn't wanna travel, so I went to Nichols and Stones.

MN: Did a lotta people move out of Gardner?

FA: No. A lot of em retired if they were about ready to retire. There, when they eventually closed, there wasn't that many left. Lotta people kept going as before, if they had a chance to go somewhere else, they left. I stayed to the bitter end.

MN: Why?

FA: I don't know, why not? I hated to go look for a job, so. Now they tell me retire and go work part time somewhere else to pay my insurance. I don't wanna go look for another job, I'll stay there. See, I can retire now, cause I was 62 last year, but I would have no insurance, so I gotta stick it out for another two years.

MN: And, when you were at Heywoods, ah, did you belong to the union?

FA: Yeah, you had to, I didn't belong while I was in the office, but I belonged to the union for three years, I guess, but when I went in the office, ah, Mr. Greenwood had me

taken outta the union, because I was not supposed to be, you know, I was clerical so he had me taken out. And when they went on strike, I, I hadda go to work, and he said if they stop you, don't, don't go in, but he said if they don't say nothing you come to work, so I had to.

MN: That must have been a strange feeling? Wasn't it?

FA: Yeah, it was a strange feeling, you know, all your friends are out there walking a picket line and you're crossing it, but I hadda try. He said if, if they said, don't let you in, don't go, but if they don't, they didn't bother me, so I, I worked all the time they were on, on strike. It was eight weeks, I guess. But they, we worked, I guess, they're on strike for eight weeks, I think I worked for four and then they layed me off and I collected my checks, but. Yeah, it's not a good feeling, when everybody's out there, all your friends and you're walking over the line.

MN: Did any of them get angry with you?

FA: No. They, they realized I was you know, I was, it was just like everybody else, all the bosses come to work, I mean, if they stopped us, we would've, we wouldn't of gone in, but they didn't bother you.

MN: Why did they go on strike?

FA: Oh, it was ah, it was mostly the piece workers because (tape stopped).

MN: Okay, I don't know what happened.

FA: Now, where were we?

MN: Yeah, really! Ah, I asked you why they went on strike.

FA: Oh, well, the piece workers, they were getting 100%. If they did something that there was something wrong and they couldn't make piece work, they'd give em 100% to say, if they were making \$10 an hour, so they'd give em their \$10 an hour to do this work that wasn't right, anyway. It would take em longer to do it or whatever, so they'd give em that 100%. Some of these people, you know, people are goofs off, goof offs. They'd take their sweet time and spend something that should take em an hour they'd probably due in four hours. Well, anyway, they wanted to take that and give em 90% instead of the 100%. Well, these people, all these piece workers, they, voted on strike, strike, strike, strike, so they out numbered the day workers, naturally, there's more piece workers, so they went on strike. So they went on strike for eight weeks and they went back for 87.5%, see. So they offered em 90% so they went all that time, and they'll never make it up, no way are they going to make up that money.

MN: Was that in 56?

FA: I don't remember.

MN: Or 61, there were two , I guess.

FA: I, I really don't remember, but, I can't remember dates, what I remember was the strike. But that, that's what I understand it was all about, I don't know what else it was that 87, was 90% and they went back for 87.5. They stayed out eight weeks to take less, right? That's the way I understood it.

MN: When they went back, was there a different feeling in the plant?

FA: Oh, not really. I mean ah, they, the, there was a wildcat strike one time, the whole
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sanding room walked out. The, it wasn't authorized, so a lot of them lost their jobs. Lot of em went to work somewhere else, they didn't take em back. They told em, gave em an ultimatum, you come back or you know, they're going to replace em and then a lot of em just went to work somewhere else, they didn't, they stayed on strike, they replaced em. But the, I don't know what that was about, more money I guess, again, too. The, that's one of the best pay, paying places than any factory goes is the sanding room. They make good money and they always want more.

MN: Why?

FA: I don't know. They, ah, they got it so they can, they slow down when they're timing em. You know. And then when they get there, (blank) course it takes some, you gotta know whacha doing too. They always make good money, Heywoods always make good money in sanding room and I guess they do up Nichols and Stones too. Its the mill rooms the least, it's the least money and they work the hardest, to me.

MN: Why didn't you move to the sanding room?

FA: No. I've only got a few more years to go on.

MN: But I mean,

FA: I don't want piece work, I don't want piece work, I never work piece work, I'm not going to start.

MN: Why not?

FA: Well, I, I had the job, I like my job. I wasn't looking, I got by with what I got, I lived with mother, don't pay much board. I had enough money.

MN: Did people complained that things would be pressure, or was there a reason people didn't like piece work?

FA: Well, people ah, most people like it, but I don't. I don't. I'd like take my time, I mean, you know, and you get piece work and then somebody always fighting well he's got good job, he's got the bad job, you, this way I never fight with nobody. You know, I'm not complaining, nobody wants my job, so. But piece work they're always at each others throat a lotta places. I don't know about Nichols, I don't s, most of the piece work is upstairs, but you don't have a good relationship when thes, when you're piece work, cause everybody figures you're getting the cream and they're getting the crap.

MN: And don't they kind of have this way, like if I'm working next to you I shouldn't make too many more things than you do.

FA: Right.

MN: So I should stop after a certain amount.

FA: Well, you know they had the, in Heywoods years ago they had this their cabinet room. Well, they these certain guys, my brother worked in there for a while, the cabinet room and they had say I don't know, the rate then, but say 9 dollars an hour, we'll all make around 9 dollars an hour, not over, maybe less, but never over. Well this one guy would go in there and he would make 10, 15 dollars an hour, he'd make over what the others did. Well, these, these other guys found out about it so they'd go and take his tools, they'd hide em all over the place, they'd do these things, so he couldn't, he'd have to spend half the time looking for his stuff. They finally got

him so that he went back down cause if you make too much, they re-time you and they're going to cut you. Now, there's one guy in there he used to make money hand over fist. He had made 15 dollars an hour when everybody make, he'd all kinds of money and they'd re-time that guy, they figured he was pushing the pencil, but no way, they'd never never and they retimed him, that guy, I don't know he probably had no wasted motions. They timed em and he was making the money and they, they couldn't prove otherwise and he was really fast, I guess, but he used to make a lotta money that kid.

MN: Would the other guys get mad?

FA: No this one he's working all by himself, he's assembling chairs, but he was all by himself, but they figured he's pushing a pencil because they'd figure it's impossible to make that kinda money doing that job, because, or, you know what a ladder back chair looks like, well, he, he would put all those things together except for the seating you know, there's a lotta stuff you gotta, he'd make all kindsa money. And all the years he worked at Heywoods they could never, never find him pushing a pencil, they'd time him, they'd ah, he always made it, though, he made more money than anybody, I guess.

MN: What's pushing the pencil?

FA: Cheating.

MN: Oh, writing down

FA: If you're doing 10 chairs and you're putting down 20. Know, they could do that in Heywoods. I know this guy when the, I used to do his time care cause they couldn't read his writing in the office, so he used to run the saw and he'd ah, he'd give me the paper and I'd copy it down, you know, and gheese, couple times I'd gee that looks familiar, looks like I wrote that before, you know, I, I. So I, for the heck of it one day I put a check mark up in the corner, so two, three days later, don't I get that same paper back, exact same thing. I just, so I kept doing it. That guy every two, three days would pass in one of those papers, see, he never did the work. He did it, but to make piece work, he'd keep using the same paper.

MN: So he wouldn't necessarily produced that many that day?

FA: No, he was pushing the pencil, but it wasn't up to me, ah, I mean it's none of my business. Somebody else shoulda figured that out. I didn't say nothing, but now, you mean to tell me they didn't know, it was su, like I say Heywoods was such a big operation they did thousands at a time, well this guy could do that. He'd done it for 15 years, he was, he's dead now, please his sole (laugh) but ah, I mean, it wasn't up to me to go, I'm not going to go rat on something, I mean other people were there before I was there. Nobody would never figure that out.

MN: Did they catch him?

FA: No, they never caught him. Never. He got through there and he come to work down Nichols and Stones too, he retired from Nichols and Stones, but he wasn't piece work when he was at Nichols, but, he had put that, those papers keep, he'd save em, and every so often he'd put em back, he'd rase off the date, put a new date. Then eventually

he'd through some away, he'd make new ones, you know, but anybody else was on that job, they could never make no money and he always made his money. Always, always, anybody else, they'd never make it, how come Eddie can, I say, I don't know. That's how he made it. But.

MN: Other people must have had other little, weren't there other little systems beside pushing the pencil to, to make your money.

FA: Oh, no, wha, there couldn't be no other, that's, cause you only need to do put in more pieces than you did, really, and on our side, I don't know about the other sides, but you, if you did 50 pieces you put in 100, so you made twice as much, but you actually didn't do the pieces.

MN: Would the foreman figure it out?

FA: I don't know, nobody pays any attention. I, I just figured out, now, because I kept writing em cause everything looks familiar all the time. Somethings wrong, so for my own, I just made a check mark, and I kept getting those papers back and back maybe not this week, but next week I'd get em back on paper and then, hey, so once I found out, I quit checking em. But, if there's a will, there's a way, I guess.

MN: Some guys told me, too, that, ah, I don't know if it was piece work or day work, but they would punch in, sometimes they would go down to the pool room or go out.

FA: Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, years ago in the sanding room, they used to have ah, oh, I don't know what you'd call it. A kitty. They would say, if they did so, 100 pieces to make their money for the day and they made 150, well, they'd take that tag and they'd put it in their kitty. So, they were going to stop that, so they told em no more kitties, you know, so they say, everybody's gotta turn in their kitties some guys had 1000 dollars in there.

MN: How did it go, I didn't understand.

FA: It's a kitty, you know they call it a kitty, but see, say if they did 150 pieces,

MN: Each person?

FA: No just one person. He sanded, these arms, like, 150 of em and he only needed 100 to make his day work, he puts in say 9 dollars an hour, he doesn't want to go over 9 dollars an hour, so it takes 100 pieces to make 9 dollars an hour, so he made 150, so instead of passing in the 50, he'd put that in his kitty.

MN: The actual physical pieces.

FA: Yeah, he'd put in the 100 and the, the 50 he'd save for a day maybe he don't feel good, got a big head, so, lot of it, some of these guys built up 1000 dollars that way so they had to turn it in and they turned in Monday like. Or, if they come in on Saturday.

MN: When they turn it in, they would turn in the arms, not.

FA: No, no, just the, the arms would be gone, but they'd turn in the paper that was with the arms, you know. They wouldn't keep the arms, they couldn't keep those because they wouldn't have no room, but they'd leave the arms, but nobody checks up on this. Because it's such a big operation, so they'd keep, they, they had a little slip of paper with it, what they'd put in their hundred and they'd keep the 50. Okay, and if they'd come in on Saturday, well, they're time and a half, they'd come in and they'd take from that kitty and they wouldn't do no work, you know, so they'd get time and a half and they, they're not doi time and a half and they, they're not doing it because they had it in the kitty. So, I guess the company caught up, somebody

caught up with em and told em they'd have to turn in all their kitties, and so, some people had a, as much as 1000 dollars I was told. They had a lotta money in those kitties. See, so they stopped that, but.

MN: That's interesting all the ways people figure out.

FA: Yeah, I mean, but see when the, when they time em they slow down, you know they, they make all the motion, they do all these extra motions

END TAPE ONE, SIDE B

BEGINNING TAPE TWO, SIDE A

FA: punch out, yeah. Or they used to go to Carbones, you know, carbones, I don't know what it is now, its right across the road here, they used to go there. They'd punch out and go there, drink and time to go home, they'd come back.

MN: Would the foreman know that was going on?

FA: Oh, ah, some would, some wouldn't.

MN: Who's, who's side were they on, the foreman, management or the worker?

FA: They should have been on management, really. But, they don't pay much attention, some of em, I guess, I don't know. They, they, they would do that. If they'd had business, they'd come in, punch in and then, that's all makes that kitty, see, that's all from the kitty, they were taking this, or if they made it during the week and they'd come in Saturdays, and they'd have enough to take care of Saturdays, so they wouldn't, they'd just come in, punch in and some go out, some would just hang around, go visit this one, visit, talk to that one and, I mean that's why it's not, you know I, sometimes I think it'd be better if you had a pretty good day rate and everybody'd be day rate, instead of this piece work.

MN: What's the purpose of the piece work?

FA: Put out more production, but you, you're really not, you know, because the people are always trying to pull something over the company, you know, they slow down, they put out lousy work, lotta stuff comes back.

MN: Did they care about the quality?

FA: You know, now they had inspectors, so like my brother used to tell me, he was a cabinet maker, you know in the hutches or something, they'd hang the doors. He'd go tell the boss that door's not right, well, they had to have it out for the orders, he says, oh, that's alright, let it go. So, the boss, instead of having it fixed there and then, taking the time, he'd say let it go, then it'd go out, they'd ship em out, they'd turn around, they'd send em back. So, where's your profit? You know. But the boss had to want it look good for him, but it couldn't a look to good for him when they were coming back, to me. Fix it when they were told about em, but they don't.

MN: Did, did these people feel, do you think, like, well, the days when they used to make a whole chair, some guy sitting there, make the whole thing, are long gone, do you think they felt like they were still making a chair, even though they would just turn a leg or make a door, you know what I mean?

FA: Yeah, I don't know, they're making part of it, but ah, I don't know how they felt.

MN: I wonder if they felt connected to it? Did you feel connected to the tables or chairs or, do you know what I mean?

FA: Well, I felt like I was part of it. I was there, you know. I imagine they do they helped make it.

MN: And what about ah, about parties at work? Didn't the women used to do things®

FA: Well, you see, on our side we didn't have that much women, we weren't that wild but ah, I guess there's some wild things happen on the other side, that's why they stopped em th

I guess they're real, not too good to talk about. They had some, they, they'd get loaded and they'd take off, they'd pair off, go here and go there, so they stopped em because they figured if somebody really got hurt, they got conveyors and up, up in the paint shop I guess they were, have some wild ones over there. I never went, I don't know, but

MN: And did people really stop when the company said cut it out?

FA: Yeah, well they had to because ah, this was during working hours, the company said no parties you didn't have no parties, or they used to go off and take a drink you know once in a while, somebody, or like that, but they, they wouldn't, they'd shut down everything and they'd just have a party in the afternoon, but they stopped it because we used to, we used to have it, they'd bring in some liquor down in the mill room and we'd have a few drinks and then but we didn't have that many women, or that many, so most of em were married anyway.

MN: And mostly it was women who organized the parties or men.

FA: No, the both, ov, over there. I tha, I never been to one of theirs so

MN: But in your own room.

FA: No we never, we just, never had no parties like they, they'd bring in food and it was never like that.

MN: Not for Christmas or anything?

FA: No, no not really.

MN: And somebody else told me that the men would sometimes play cards at lunchtime.

FA: Yeah, a lotta men used to play ah, I don't know, I can't remember, the thing with the little pegs.

MN: Cribbage?

FA: Yeah, cribbage, a lot of em, they'd play cribbage and they. You had certain guys would get together. But

MN: Or even wrestle, he said.

FA: Oh, I don't know, see, ah, we never, most of that stuff happened on the other side, we didn't have ah, that much going on in our side. Our side was calm.

MN: Did you think of it really as two sides, like people would

FA: Yeah, well

MN: say well, I work on this side or that side?

FA: You realize I worked there a lotta years before I went over this, the other side at all.

MN: Ever?

FA: Ever. I worked there a lotta years, finally, I got the courage one time I went over, I went over the bridge and went over there and I got lost, I couldn't find my (laugh) way, wouldn't find my way back. I went to the paint shop for something, I, I didn't know were I was, I hadda. Finally, I had to ask somebody how to get back. So I got back, but after that I went over there a few times I got used to it. But, that was a big place, did you ever walk through there.

MN: Were other people like you, they just stuck in their own spot?

FA: Most of em, you, they, you stay in your own department, really. The only thing is, the ladies room, we had to go upstairs, our ladies room was on the third floor so we had to go upstairs for the ladies room, that was in the sanding room area. So we'd go up there for the ladies room, but most part we stayed in our own place. You weren't supposed to go roaming around anyway, unless you had business. A lotta people did, but.

MN: Did you know people in the other departments?

FA: Yeah, well, su, I used to bowl with some of em, you know, Rita Maillet, and women. I used to bowl with em, so. A lot of em I, I know by seeing em, but names I wouldn't know. You'd see em going in, say hi, or over the cafeteria or something, but, I never was that friendly with any of em except the ones I bowl with.

MN: What about management, did you know Mr. Greenwood?

FA: Oh, yes. Boy, I, Mr. Greenwood come in one time he raised a mustache, you know, he was, his wife was dropping him off so I was in there with my boss, and I (whistle sound) I whistled like that. Oh, my boss he almosted dropped to the floor. Whatcha doing, whatcha doing. I said hey, what's wrong with that. I didn't figure nothing wrong. His secretary told me a few days later, boy, did Mr. Greenwood get a kick outa that. And I didn't figure that was an insult, so, he kinda, he was very nice, a very nice man. I met that man one time and he never forgot my name. I did at one of the baw, bowling banguets, he always spoke to me by name. He had, had a memory, he could remember, he'd meet you once, and he'd knew who you were. He's really a nice man, I liked Mr. Greenwood, yeah.

MN: Would you see him in the plant?

FA: Oh yeah, yeah, I'd see him, going, like I say, when he was going to work, his wife was dra, but my boss, oh boy, he thought I was going to be in trouble. I says, hey, that's nothing wrong with that. Yeah, there's a picture of him in here. Or is it in the other section? He was really nice, I, I enjoyed him. I liked that man. And he retired and went down the cape and then you'd never see him that much. Right here. Yeah he is nice.

MN: And that's what happened to him, he retired?

FA: Yeah, he retired and his sons took over. Sons and he went down the cape and he, act, after he went down the cape I guess he come up, I saw him once, he come through the shop, shaked hands with everybody and I guess he passed away. He was nice, though.

MN: What would happen if you had a problem or a grievance since you didn't belong to the union? What would you do if something bothered you?

FA: Well, you'd have, you'd have to go to management.

MN: Did that ever happen to you?

FA: No, no. You'd have to go see somebody higher than your boss, right? No, I never had no problem.

MN: And then, at the end, you said that when Heywood's closed did you look around at different places or you went right to Nichols and Stones?

FA: No, I ah, I wanted something close, where I could walk, so Simplex I had heard too much about Simplex, the girls are always bickering, you know, I don't want to go somewhere were, too many women, sometime, you get together and they're. I had a couple of girlfriends who worked there and there, and heard too many stories so I didn't even bother with Simplex, I went down.

MN: Like what do you mean, bickering?

FA: Well, they, I don't know, they're always fighting. I, I don't know if its because of piece work or this, I don't know, I heard too many stories, anyway, I didn't, I didn't want to go over there, so I went down below. It would have been closer for me. I went Nichols and Stones, somebody had spoken for me, so, they hired me.

MN: And did you take any vacation in between?

FA: Well, I, I got ah, I was out June and I never went to work till September after labor day. I was, didn't want to go to work before that. Was in no hurry. Take a little time off, well they gave me severence pay, so I was getting paid every two weeks plus I was collecting my checks. But they didn't count it, they says that was a gift, so.

MN: Did they do that for everyone who stayed till the end?

FA: No this was just the ah salary, I was on salary the last two years, just the salaried help.

MN: Did you feel more like a plant worker or management at Heywoods?

FA: I felt plant. I was, I was mo, in the factory. I wasn't in the main office I was in the factory. I wore my own dungarees and clothes, I didn't dress up. I wouldn't wanna work in, where I have to dress up all the time. I'm not a dressy, I don't like to dress. This is what I like, ah, (laugh) you know? So. I dre, wore my old clothes. My

MN: And then, what did you do at Nichols and Stone?

FA: Well, I'm working at operating a rip saw.

MN: Oh, you are?

FA: Yeah.

MN: Is that what you started doing when you went there, first?

FA: Yeah, I was there a few days and I was on another machine, ah, but they put me on that, I've been on that ever since.

MN: Did you choose, or they told you?

FA: No they asked me, put me there, so I stayed there. I coulda signed up for other jobs, but

MN: But that's piece work, isn't it?

FA: No, supposed to be, but it isn't. They don't, the lumbar's not any good no more, you could never, it's a bonus system, but I never been piece work, too old to start that/

MN: And tell me how that goes, tell me exactly, you go to work and tell me what happens.

FA: I go to work and operate the rip saw.

MN: Yeah, but, pretend I never saw a rip saw in my life.

FA: Well, I'm on one end, I operate and there's a guy on the other end and I get the rough stock and I gotta oh, I don't know what you call it, take the knots out, you know knots are if there split. I have something like 19 inches right know I'm doing 19 inch ash. So if there's a knot in there, I gotta cut the knot out and when it's clean, the guy piles it on a, behind him on a track, then we, that's all we do, just take the, we don't cut the sides or, no, width we just clean it out, making sure it's all good.

MN: So you try and get 19 inch lengths.

FA: Well, we, we, then, and lengths are 19 inch, but we try to get, cause they can glue em up after for seats, so we gotta, oh, take the knots out, the impurities or whatever you wanna call it. It can't be, no knots, no splits, and its ah no rot, sometime you get dry rot, you can't have any dry rot, so I just cut it out.

MN: Do you pass it through to the guy on the other side.

FA: Well, I put it through the saw and the saw cuts out and he'll through away the bad part and put the good part on the load.

MN: And does he change or have you worked with him for a while?

FA: Well, ah, I was working with some young kid, but he quit so then this other guy was on there for a while, but he didn't like the job, so they put this one, he's retired, he only works, well, right know he's working 4½ days, but for a while he's only working three days, and whe, and when goes, the put somebody else with me.

MN: Does it matter who's on the other side?

FA: Not really.

MN: And do you ever need to communicate with that person? I mean, they can't hear you, can they?

FA: Oh yeah, I gotta loud voice, (laugh).

MN: Cause sometimes people tell me the had hand signals they could go, you know, communicate sort of with sign language.

FA: Yeah, well, we do that too, but we, once in a while we holler back and forth, yeah.

MN: And can you ever, like, make jokes, or, you know, pass the time of day with him?

FA: No, it's too much noise for that. You can't, you can't really keep up a conversation because that, see if, if it was just for our, our machine, but there's a planer behind him and a planer makes a lotta racket so you couldn't, couldn't really keep up a conversation cause he's deaf and I'm deaf, so.

MN: Are you?

FA: One ear. So ah we can't hear that good with all the noise, but.

MN: Now you said when you first went there people weren't so friendly.

FA: No, they weren't, I mean, ah you figure you're sitting there, they had a place like I say when I went there I smoked and you, maybe a room about this size with, sit

there and there's benches you can smoke, it's, there's designated areas. So we'd sit and smoke and these other people been there for a long time, somebody would come in, walk in, never say hi, good morning or nothing. You know, I couldn't believe it. I do, I don't figure that's real sociable, you know. And it, well, not to me because I didn't know em anyway, but these other people were there a long time and they worked there quite a while and they're not speakin', I don't understand, but.

MN: Wha, who do you eat lunch with now?

FA: Oh, Pearl Netzel, really and ah couple of others, it all depends.

MN: Do the women still get together in the ladies room?

FA: No, not here, we haven't got a ladies room. Not, not that kind, we had a big place, ladies room in Heywoods is about like this and then you had I guess 4 or 5 stalls this way and you had a big bench along here. There you got, we had only that one ladies room and its bou, bout as big as a small closet and ah, it's real small. You go do your duty and then you leave because there's no place to sit or nothing.

MN: Where do you get together on breaks?

FA: We sit around the, on the floor, you know, on a load or whatever. In the summertime we sit outdoors when it's nice.

MN: Do you still eat your lunch at a restaurant?

FA: No, no restaurants close by. We only get a half an hour so I bring a sandwich. No time to run to a restaurant in a half an hour, see. Central Variety was right, we used to just go right down the road, you could have time.

MN: Was it a half hour at Heywoods?

FA: For a while, at first it was an hour, then when years after we went to a half an hour but to go like there it's right next door, but if you have, Nichols an, where you going to go, you'd have to walk down the depot or, cause I don't take my car to work, I walk. Then everybody's in there, you'd probably never get out in a half an hour, everybody goes for lunch the same time.

MN: Do they have a social club?

FA: Yeah, yeah. But nobody seems to go to that. They'll go to Christmas party and the outings, but like they had a Valentines party and nobody goes, there's 15 people I guess or something, not a Valentines party, a halloween last year and nobody shows up so I spend all that money for a few people so they don't have that no more.

MN: Are they down?

FA: No. The only thing they have now is the outing and a Christmas party. They get pretty good at that. But those other, I don't dance so I don't go to those dances.

MN: And what about the workers? Do people work harder or less hard than they used to? Do you think? The young workers?

FA: The young workers don't want to work. They want to take a day off here a day off there, et, these kids today, they're, I don't know, I wasn't brought up that way. I was brought up whe, if you gotta job you worked, you know, not, well, you work, they stay out too late they don't come to work the next day. I used to stay up 4 o'clock in the morning, ah if you went out 4 o'clock in the morning, you went to work the next day, you didn't stay home. You maybe didn't feel too good, but you went to work. These kids, they don't, they wanna work three days, they, four days, that's they can't get no good help, no more, either.

MN: I wonder what changed?

FA: I don't know, ah, too much money I guess, lot, look at these kids today, now, you look at the young ones, most of em, they got all kinds of money. Nobody wants to deliver papers no more. You see any kids, they can't get em to deliver papers cause their parents give em the money, or I don't know where else they're gettin' it, but the girls delivering now, most of em, they want the money to buy clothes, but the guys are, they's just not interested and some of these kids are married and got kids and they don't wanna work and the kid used to work with me he got through from there he went downa that gun place New England firearms, they fired em from there because he never would work, he'd take Friday's off, whenever he felt like it take a day off, then he went downa Bents, he's beena, this is within a years time a year and a half, he's outa Bents now, now he's some other place, they, they don't wanna work and they put up with Nichols and Stones a long time, no, lotta these other places not goinna put up with it, they get rid of em.

MN: Does that happen with?

FA: Lot, lotta kids, they don't, I don't know if they, something they don't like they just quit, you know, you don't do, boss tells em to do this they don't wanna do that, they just don't come back.

MN: When they're there, do they work hard?

FA: Not really. Not most of em anyway. You get some, some that will work. You get some of em they don't wanna work, they want 10 dollars an hour, but they wanna sit on the kiester, they don't wanna do nothing for it.

MN: Are there people of all different ages in Nichols and Stones?

FA: Oh yeah, yeah. In my department there's, the guy, that works with me he's ah, must be 69, I'm 62, the kid that works over there must be in his maybe late 20's and the guy that works down further is in his 50's and the other one's 56, nother ones maybe in his 40's. They're all, not too many women, there's Stella, she's, she must be, she's older than I am, so she must be 64, 65 and then Pearl she's a little older than I am, and that's all women there are.

MN: And that's what room?

FA: Mill room, same as Heywoods mill room.

MN: Are there, do most of the women work in a certain part of the factory?

FA: Paint shop, lotta women, in paint shop, more, there's na, not many, two in the sanding room I guess and most of em work in the paint shop. They don't the mill room, I don't like the paint shop, so we're happy. Yeah.

MN: Ah, if you were going to change something about where you work, what would you change to make it better?

FA: I don't know, I don't know. I really don't know, 4 day week I guess. There's not much you can change were I work, far as I know. I gotta good boss, I, I like my, my bosses are, I mean, I don't give them a bad time, they don't give me a bad time.

MN: Is it different from working in Heywoods?

FA: How?

MN: I don't know, different feeling?

FA: Ah, Ah, Heywoods was like home to me, let's face it, I was there all those years, you know, you, kinda grows on you. I hated to leave there, I admit it, but, you know you so, spend so many years in a place, you can figure you're going be there for a few more years, till you retire, it's going last that long, but, nothing's sure, but death and taxes, right, you never know.

MN: You said that the guys have um ways of getting around the piece workers at Nichols, too?

FA: I have no idea, probably, I imagine so, I image they do. See there's nobody in our room piece work that I know of, maybe one guy, two guys, but most of our place has day work.

MN: And do you have any of those parties, Birthdays or Christmas on the floor?

FA: No, no, they never did when ah, not that I know of, I don't know about ah, across the road, I mean, ah, not across the road, but in the paint shop, but we never did.

MN: I just, I have a last question Frances, which is um, how do you think that, that work has changed over the years, or, or how people feel about their work?

FA: Well, I don't know, I think it's getting a lotta machinery that does a lot, makes it a lot better work than they used to have, I imagine. They keep getting better and better with this machinery. I did see a lotta machinery that they had in that new part of Nichols and Stones, you know, that, it's all like computerized stuff you know to dry the chai, tables or whatever, so I figure the machinery get's better. People, I don't know, people stay the same, right, some good and some bad.

MN: Will the machinery, do you think, replace the people, or what?

FA: Not really, I mean, it's it's ah, like, dry to dry the, after they spray it, it really don't replace em, but it, they have more efficient, I guess you'd say. They, had a nice operation down there, you should get Red Riley to take you through there, you know, he would, I'm sure.

MN: I went through one day, but I wanna go back?

FA: Did you go through that new part?

MN: I think it was.

FA: Yeah, that brick, I mean cinder block, yeah, he, they took us through when they before it opened up, but I haven't been through since ah its' in operation, but they took us through, you know, showed us all this.

MN: All the employees?

FA: Yeah, yeah, they took us all, but, lotta that's stuff's new, see, dra, dry them, comes, put it in 'n before you know it it comes out the other end and it's all dry, before they used to put, leave it on the floor some places, just air dry it, this's a lotta faster, I imagine.

MN: And what about, sometimes people tell me that the work is monotonous.

FA: Oh, yeah, you do the same thing, day in, day out, there. Mine's monotonous. The only thing that changes, I get longer and shorter ones, but it is monotonous.

MN: But you still go to work?

FA: Oh yeah, I go to work cause it's, if, it's a living, right? I got two more years, though, that's it.

MN: You, you don't mind that it gets monotonous?

FA: No, you, resign to the fact, I guess, after a while. My other jo, Heywoods wasn't monotonous, cause I was doing different things, you know. I do, do time cards, I do those other things, I'd run the copying machine, ah, chase around on the floor once in a while. Eventually it'd get a little monotonous, but not like, this is the same thing day in, day out, eight hours a day. You stand in one spot. See ah, and I'm not used to working with anybody too much and that makes a difference. All those years I never worked with anybody, I mean, if I wanna work fast, I work fast, if I wanna work slow, if I didn't feel too good, I worked slow, here, you're always waiting for somebody. I'm ready to work and he's gone, or you know?

MN: People must get partners, though, don't they get some people work in teams all the time?

FA: No, not too many. Well, they, di, di on a planer this guy cuts the lumbar and one hands it to em and comes down and goes through the planer there's three guys working there, but see the guy that cutting he cuts like a bat and the kid now see has the hardest job no way he can keep up with that guy, no way, I mean, now you figure they'd work together, but they're not working together, he can never get anybody to want that job, because of that. You really, really, no way I'd do it.

MN: Which job?

FA: It's ah on the planer, right behind us, that, that kid cuts, you wouldn't believe how he cuts, that stock comes down and the, sgut sometimes four differently lengths and he has to pile, run around put on four different flats and that kid has to work and when he shuts if off the other guy gets mad. I wouldn't want to work like that, I'd rather work by myself.

MN: Is somebody waiting for the stock that you put out, somebody's depending on you.?

FA: Yeah, it goes from me and goes through the joiner and the guys glue it up to seat blanks.

MN: So if you were really slow, they'd be in trouble.

FA: Yeah, yeah, but nobody's piece work, not in that room, they, the guys that, I'd only get a special rate or whatever, but nobodies piece work (intelligible)

MN: But are you supposed to put out a certain amount every day.

END TAPE 2, SIDE A

BEGINNING TAPE 2, SIDE B

FA: (unintelligible) If you get lu, couple a weeks ago we had a lumber we just had to make sure it was square, hey, we did good, but this stuff when you gotta keep cutting it, its.

MN: Do you have a conveyor system?

FA: Well, oh, not really, they have in the paint shop. A conveyor. They put the chairs when they assemble em, they put em on a conveyor and they go to the paint shop, but we don't have one, it's, we have like a track and there's like, oh, you put the lumber on and you roll it, but it's not, ah, just roll it from us to the joiner, but conveyor we don't have.

MN: Do they get new things in to make it more efficient all the time?

FA: Well I got a few new machines in, I guess. But there's not much you can do, a boring machine's a boring machine, right? They got some kind of a boring machine in, but it, all kinds of buttons on it and stuff, but, it's fairly new, a year or so ago, but the most of the new stuff is in that new plant, the one they built. They showed us a few new, the new stuff in there, but our place they didn't have too much that's new.

MN: Do you think they're going have furniture factories in Gardner in 20, 30, 40 years?

FA: No, I don't think so. Your lumber is getting harder to get and it's lousy. I don't know, I think it's going down hill.

MN: Why?

FA: I don't know, (laugh), the, it is, look it, how many factories you got left, now, really, there's not that many left. They, this is going, to me, I think they're going down hill, I don't know, they're slowing up.

MN: Oh, there's not as many orders, is that what you mean?

FA: I don't think so, I, last year I never worked no, oh no overtime at all, the year before all kinds a overtime, so something must be slowing up, right? Right? I don't know if people get cheaper, but you get cheaper you're going to get a cheaper product too. I've seen some of this stuff from Yugoslavia and Rich's and ah you know you can see, right, you's almost stick your finger into where it goes into the, into the side of the stretcher, it's cheap, you're getting cheep, but it's not going last you, I got stuff from Heywoods that I've had for since I worked there and it's gotta maybe a little split on the thing, my mother has a bedroom set there's not, not a thing wrong with that bedroom set and it's, it's not new, it's 30, 40 years old. So, I don't know, you're paying for a product, but a lotta people don't, lotta people can't afford it, not today, you know, fyou, if you gotta pay, ah, 150 dollars for one chair, lotta these kids can't afford it, not with the rents are today. People want big money, so they gotta get big money for their chair.

MN: How do you think people would earn a living if there weren't any furniture factories here?

FA: Well, I imagine something else would come in, eventually, but I don't know what. but your lumber's getting scarcer all the time, that's what they claim. And its more expense and the more expense the lumber the more expense the chair, course lotta people can afford it, but. The see, you figure all these new houses people are building,

how come the furniture not, you know, the business is not booming. Apparently they buy the house, they can't afford the furniture, they gotta, well, it's true, you know, they gotta go bu, piece by piece, right? You're a young, married person, you should know that with kids.

MN: Can't afford the house or the furniture.

FA: Oh, but ih, it's true, though, you know. Now, I got a niece or, she her land was given to her and she built a house maybe 4, 5 years ago, well, she was lucky she build when she did, because she couldn't afford to build today, her mother and father gave her the land.

MN: I guess more and more people are living in apartments instead of houses.

FA: Yeah, but you can't afford the apartments. Now, they got a young kid working with me, he's, well ah, maybe makes $8\frac{1}{2}$ an hour, alright, he's ah, his wife's expecting, he pays over 400 dollars a month rent, no heat, he's ah paying on a car, now what's he got left? His wife don't work. She worked last year, but she's not working this year cause she's expecting in a month or so. I mean, you need two people working to, to ford, we don't make the kinda money in this area to afford 4 or 5 hundred dollars a month rent, we don't. I pay 25 dollars a week, I'm luck, (laugh) right? But, what about these young marrieds, they must be killing em.

MN: And what do people make in the furniture factories?

FA: Well, like I say, this kid, he makes 8.55.

MN: And what does he, he works on, in the mill room?

FA: He's boring, yeah, maybe some day's he makes 9 dollars, $9\frac{1}{2}$, but what's that when you're paying almost 500 dollars a month rent. You should be making 500 dollars a week to pay 500 dollars a month, right? That's what they always claim. What you make per week you shouldn't pay more per month rent, that's the criteria they use, they always did when I was young, anyway. So this kid, he's suffering. He's paying 100 something dollars a month for a car, almost 500 dollars a month for rent, he has to pay something for heat. I said, when you get the, have the baby, you better buy cloth diapers, you can't afford no pampers. That's 10 dollars a week for pampers, every, ain't no way he can afford it. So, ah, I don't know what he's going to do, he keeps going under and under, you know. Some months he don't this, some months he don't pay that. Eventually, it's going to catch up to em, they're all going to be there at once. He gotta do that or get a part time job somewhere else to.

MN: Do a lotta the people have jobs after the factory?

FA: I used to, when I worked at Heywoods ah, I worked at Heywoods 40, what was it 45, 48 hours and I went to the Old Mill and I was 21 I wanna buy a new car, so I went to the Old Mill and I worked there 40 hours a week. That's when I was young, though, I's like I says, 20, 21. Worked there 5 years. But I wanna buy I car and I wanna pay cash, so.

MN: Waitressing?

FA: No, I worked in the kitchen, I don't waitress, I don't like to work with people, (laugh) I'm on the shy, maybe I don't sound it, but I'm on the shy side, really, so, I'd work in the kitchen, on steam table. I worked there, but when you want something you're

going to work for it, right? After I got my, enough money to buy my car, I quit. I couldn't do it now, because I'm too old, but when you're young, you know, 21, well, what, hey, that's do that standing on my head.

MN: What are you going to do when you retire?

FA: I'm gonna enjoy myself, that's what I'm going to do. I be, I can go to Florida for the winter if I want. My brother's got a, he's going to retire about the same time, he's got a house out there, and they got another, extra room for me if I can my mother, but, see I have to wait, my mother's 82 and she, she don't wanna leave, so I have to, I can't leave for too long, cause sh, can't leave her alone, you know, who's gonna shovel for her. I'm invited to Arizona. My sister goes to Arizona for winter, she, she invited my out there, ah, I'd be all set, if my mother would go, but, I'm going to be stuck for the two weeks at a time, I guess.

END TAPE 2, SIDE B